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COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 81st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 26 April 1991, at 11.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. VOYAME

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 3) (continued)

1. Mr. SORENSEN, speaking as former director of the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (RCT) in Copenhagen, introduced the film entitled "In Spite Of", which had been made by Astrid Henning-Jensen.

2. The film was intended to make public opinion aware of the problems which victims of torture who had sought asylum in Denmark had to overcome in trying to find their place in society. It told the story of a young man and a young woman with a seven-year-old son who had managed, thanks to their courage and the good offices of the Red Cross, to flee their country, where they had been detained and subjected to systematic torture.

3. The film showed how those refugees, who had requested asylum in Denmark, the host country, had been taken in hand by RCT doctors, social workers and language teachers who had given them advice and support in their efforts to find their identity again. Those efforts had nevertheless been hampered by the reactions of the local population, which had been hostile to foreigners. The film tried to make the audience aware of the serious repercussions such reactions could have on a helpless person who was struggling to regain his self-confidence after escaping from torturers who had tried day after day to convince him of an all-pervading, but shapeless and unfounded guilt.

4. No professional actors had taken part in the making of the film, although Bibi Andersson had been the narrator. The characters had played their own roles to prevent fiction from encouraging the audience to deny the evidence.

5. The film entitled "In Spite Of" on the rehabilitation of victims of torture was projected.

6. The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Sorensen for having shown the members of the Committee that film, which attested to the commendable efforts being made by the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims in Copenhagen, which Mr. Sorensen had headed for many years before becoming involved on a full-time basis in the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the United Nations Committee against Torture. It was to be hoped that the film, which showed the ravages that torture really caused, would guide the Committee in its future work.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.